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C 19038

COUNTRY:

Lebanon

SUBJECT:

Comments Concerning Politics

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- "Those you have been following the course of events in Lebanon recall 2. that there has grown up a fierce resentment against the government because of corruption. Popular disatisfaction mounted intermittently but progressively until the President was forced out of office, and on Sept 23 1952 a new Presiden t was elected. Of course, he took office on a platform of promises for reform in all departments of the government. The man elected is very likeable, and gives reason for hope that he will accomplish much in establishing clean government.
- 3. "The question now is, how soon can the reforms be effected? Recently, five months after the election, a young Lebanese attempted to commit suicide in the street directly in front of the President's mansion. He was unemployed and promises of re-employment were delayed by government officials to the point that he planned this act as a protest against non-fulfillment of political pledges.
- 4. "The man is a Moslem and has impressed himself on us by a recent visit in which he asked temporary financial assistance and declared himself to be a Protestant Christian. I leave to your closest friend among psychiatrists to explain to you the reasons which drive a man into such a spectacular course; fortunately only a few temperaments respond to such morbid urges.
- 5. "Yet, if we disregard as far as possible the purely individual features of the case, the incident can still be taken somewhat as a parable and illustrating a number of general features of the present situation in the Lebanon. A few of these features might even characterize the situation in other countries to a remote (or less than remote?) extent. Here are a few of the points which are brought to my mind.

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- 6. "1) "The genuine disappointment which must come to a sincere leader, newly assuming office, when he finds how hard it is for him to carry out promises he made before election, when he discovers the difficulties in the way of carrying out reforms. What must be the effect on such a person when he is made the target of a sensational and humiliating threat!
- 7. "One notes the incident also as an indication of danger that a general cynicism may set in which will brand all political regimes as alike; which will hold all officials equally corrupt; which quenches hope of ever finding integrity in public office. This danger is perhaps unusually likely just now in this country, where independent government has been in operation for more than five years but less than ten. If incipient democratic ideals and budding self-reliance could be nurtured a few more years, they might produce a generation of people able to keep going some glorious popular aspirations. On the other hand, a deep cynicism would tend to condition men's minds to accept a few more centuries of despotism.
- 8. "The principle most vividly illustrated to my mind is the popular expectation that the government will do everything. From this, of course, comes impatience when the government fails to do what is wanted.
- 9. "Obviously this impatience means chafing against delay in government processes, even when there is evidence that certain progress is being made. A worse result is the likelihood of putting blame for governmental imperfection against a particular official without recognizing that situations arise with which no government can cope speedily; it blinds the individual to the necessity of solving problems by economic and social processes and puts all reliance on political action.
- 10. "Finally, from this exaggerated dependence on government comes unwillingness of the individual to bestir himself in solving his own problems or to make what use he can of any slender resources he may have in meeting his own needs.
- "This is a principle which we found operating all too often in the attitude of people toward our Mission. America is a rich country and we are supposed to have access to all its wealth. Western learning is notable and we are supposed to know the solution to all difficulties. Therefore when a missionary does not grant a favor it must be due to malicious dislike of the applicant. There could not be such a thing as a limit to our capacities."

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